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SUBJECT: IRELAND REAFFIRMS SUPPORT FOR QUARTET AND ENDORSES  
EU-WIDE POLICY PROHIBITING COMMUNICATION WITH HAMAS

REF: STATE 055459

Classified By: Mary E. Daly, Pol/Econ Chief for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) On April 7th, reftel points were delivered by emboff to Department of Foreign Affairs Gulf and North Africa Section Deputy Regional Director Paul Gunning. Gunning reaffirmed that the Government of Ireland's (GOI) is not engaged with any communication with Hamas and will continue to support position of the Quartet and the EU-wide policy prohibiting contact with the listed terrorist group. The GOI is hoping to find clarity in regards to the level of aid to be provided towards the Middle East peace process from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) as well as the General Affairs and External Relations Council of the EU (GAERC) this week. Gunning expects discussions to focus on guidelines on how to handle potential contact with the Hamas and expressed that the GOI is particularly concerned with the more significant problem of preventing a humanitarian crisis and the result of changes in financial assistance to the Palestinians, who are heavily reliant on EU funding. Gunning also noted the foreseeable difficulties that lie ahead and stated that the EU is currently not in total agreement on this issue. Gunning also added that any attempt to undermine the democratic election results of the Palestine Authority would damage the EU's investment in developing a democratic government in Palestine and weaken the promotion of democracy throughout the region.

¶2. (C) In a follow up meeting on April 11th, Gunning reported that no clear conclusion was drawn from the GAERC agenda and noted the urgency to do so with hopes for a possible outcome at the next meeting in May. Gunning also mentioned that the EU foreign ministers recent decision to approve a temporary halt in funding to the Palestinian Authority might be the message needed to convince the Hamas to recognize the principles set forth by the Quartet.

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